

□

Letter to Agencies Calls for Consumer Protection Measures

□

Washington, DC – Last week, Congressman Harry Teague lead a group of 30 House members in sending a letter to Department of Energy (DOE) Secretary Steven Chu and Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) administrator Lisa Jackson calling for more accurate reporting of ENERGY STAR ratings. Two recent reports released by both the Inspector General of the DOE and EPA have placed the integrity of the label in question, citing unqualified appliances that have received the energy-efficiency moniker. The letter urges the officials to provide consumers with accurate information on products claiming the ENERGY STAR designation.

The letter comes as “Cash for Appliances”, a \$300 million stimulus program that offers rebates with the purchase of new ENERGY STAR appliances, begins to be administered. Teague, a proponent of the energy efficiency rebates, warned that without accurate information on ENERGY STAR labeled products, customers may be paying a premium – and the government would be providing credits -- for these appliances that won’t actually reduce their utility bills or energy consumption.

“This program was designed to provide savings to New Mexicans on their energy bills. It can

only be successful if the public is provided accurate information on the capabilities of these appliances,” said Congressman Harry Teague. “As families are already struggling in this economic climate, I urge both the Department of Energy and the EPA to protect consumers from misrepresentations of ENERGY STAR claims and give them the information and tools to make the best purchase.”

The funding for the ENERGY STAR appliance rebates was included in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009. To read the full ENERGY STAR Program audit report by the DOE’s Inspector General, visit <http://www.ig.energy.gov/documents/IG-0827-508.pdf>

The full text of the letter is below:

October 26, 2009

The Honorable Steven Chu

Secretary

U.S. Department of Energy

1000 Independence Ave., SW

Washington, DC 20585

The Honorable Lisa Jackson

Administrator

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.

Washington, DC 20460

Dear Secretary Chu and Administrator Jackson:

It was reported this week that many appliances boasting the Energy Star designation may not actually meet required specifications for energy efficiency. According to the Inspector General of the Department of Energy (DOE), manufacturers could be putting the stickers on unqualified products, and the inspector general at the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has said that Energy Star ratings for products overseen by EPA were not accurate or verifiable.

Many consumers purchase energy efficient appliances to save money on utility bills and reduce their environmental footprint. The integrity of the Energy Star designation is critical both to protect consumers from paying a premium on an appliance that will not deliver efficiency savings and to ensure that the Energy Star program actually succeeds in its important mission of reducing energy consumption through efficiency.

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) set aside \$300 million for a “cash for appliances” program offering rebates on purchases of many home appliances certified under Energy Star. This stimulus program is important to help families save money through energy efficiency, create jobs, and improve the economy. However, we should be wary of committing taxpayer money to a program that may not accomplish its goals of promoting energy efficiency.

As you administer the “cash for appliances” program, you should work to protect consumers already struggling in a tough economy, protect the integrity of the Energy Star program, and prevent taxpayer money from being spent on an energy efficiency program that may not actually conserve energy. To this end, we urge you to work with Congress and industry to ensure that consumers have accurate information about products claiming an Energy Star designation when shopping for appliances this holiday season.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

Harry Teague

Member of Congress

Thomas Perriello

Member of Congress

Ben Ray Lujan

Member of Congress

Judy Chu

Member of Congress

Melissa Bean

Member of Congress

Silvestre Reyes

Member of Congress

Dan Boren

Member of Congress

Bob Filner

Member of Congress

Deborah Halvorson

Member of Congress

Nita Lowey

Member of Congress

Mary Jo Kilroy

Member of Congress

Gabrielle Giffords

Member of Congress

Eric Massa

Member of Congress

Ciro Rodriguez

Member of Congress

Chellie Pingree

Member of Congress

Jim Matheson

Member of Congress

Michael McMahon

Member of Congress

Mike Quigley

Member of Congress

Martin Heinrich

Member of Congress

Marcia Fudge

Member of Congress

Walt Minnick

Member of Congress

Bruce Braley

Member of Congress

Paul Hodes

Member of Congress

John Hall

Member of Congress

Larry Kissell

Member of Congress

Solomon Ortiz

Member of Congress

Betsy Markey

Member of Congress

John Bocchieri

Member of Congress

Kathleen Dahlkemper

Member of Congress

Brian Higgins

Member of Congress

Glenn Nye

Member of Congress

###